



CATS

NEWSLETTER

The Official Journal of the Capital Area Timex/Sinclair Users Group

Presidential Ramblings

In a partial departure from our usual holiday-month meeting activity, our customary gift?- exchange will NOT take place this year. Our cookie swap will continue so hop into the kitchen, whip up a batch of your favorite cookie recipe dough and brown them to perfection in your oven. (If that ain't your bag, just hike yourself down to the supermarket and pick up some done by the professionals -- nobody will be incensed.) Obviously, don't bring lunch, unless you absolutely can't get through the afternoon without it. Programmer's punch and iced ginger ale will be available to wash the cookies down with.

Another sort of "departure" from our usual December activity, will be the chance to wish good luck to our departing EDITOR, Tim Swenson, who, in all probability, will NOT make the January meeting. SOOOOOOOO -- if you have anything that belongs to him, BRING it so he can pack it (you'll also save a trip to deliver it to him at home). Also, now's your chance to pick his brains some more before he's gone for good?. We all owe him a large debt of gratitude for his work as Editor and I'm certain we will miss his connections with the larger computer world out there. Let us hope he'll keep in touch and continue to provide our newsletter with articles.

Along those lines, we are facing finding a new Editor for our N/L. As appears normal for our group, (and many others) the influx of volunteers for the post has seriously overloaded our capacity to comprehend and evaluate their multifaceted talents with a view to performing the selection of the best one for us.

See more elsewhere in the N/L.

I quote now from a N/L I just got from another organization; "There is a great need for more members to become involved in the overall work of the Chapter.....The membership at large should not continue to rely on a relatively small group to plan and carry out the Chapter's programs.

"Edward Everett Hale, in writing for the Lend-a-Hand Society, said;

'I am only one,
But still I am one,
I cannot do everything,
But still I can do something;
And because I cannot do everything,
I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.'

May we count on you?"

Do I hear you asking, "What is going to be presented at the meeting?" ANS: Another departure from the accustomed! Those of you into Superbasic programming know what Structured Programming is. Well, our December program is going to be "unstructured". What's that mean? Well, I have noticed that at previous meetings, much palaver has occurred between members, often times rudely during the presentation, which detracts and distracts from that being presented.

Hence, this time, after a short business meeting, there will be ample time to get your heads together, with or without equipment, to ask and answer questions(of each other), show off your favorite program or share tips with others, discuss applications, clear up bugs, chew the fat, wish others the best

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for the new year, collaborate in solving people's problems (computational, of course), unlimber your trusty test meter or soldering iron to repair someones equipment, discuss how you've decided to volunteer for the editorship or why you have come up with a presentation to make at our meetings or what led you to write a N/L article or just gas in general with your fellow clubmembers at this time of good cheer in the year.

Who knows that something good may come of our time? SO, bring yourself, your hardware and software, your problems, doubts, ideas, and we'll have a high old time. DON'T FORGET YOUR COOKIES!

Once again that time draws near,
When upon this earth we hear,
Sounds of revelry and cheer.
(Gracious, no! Not caused by beer)

CATS, no different from the rest,
One more time will face the test,
With a hol-i-day gab-fest.

Bring some cookies, eat with zest,
Sample those brought by the rest.
And, to keep from being a pest,
Keep the crumbs off of your vest.

And, now, to end my little jest,
I wish you each the very best.

Mannie

Key Dates

12 November: CATS Meeting
11:00 Workshop
1:30 Executive Board Meeting
2:00 General Meeting

23 December: Newsletter Deadline
For the Next Issue

9 January : CATS Meeting

Meeting Subject

December is the yearly Holiday Meeting. Bring in your favorite cookies, snacks, etc. Punch and Ginger Ale will be provided. The plan for the meeting a open discussion of anything related to Sinclair computers. There will be a short demo of Spectator, the Spectrum emulator for the QL. Bring any software that you would like to show off.

From The Editor:

After various delays my 288 finally has arrived. Thanks to Dave Bennet, I've got a bunch of files and utilities to try out on it. I'm spending my time making the necessary cables to link it a QL, IBM, printer, and maybe a modem. I've found that soldering is one of my weak points. It's also taking me some time to figure out how to get things working.

As Mannie says, I am leaving the area. I'm heading for Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio. I hope someone does come forward and volunteers for the job of Editor, else Mark Fisher will get roped into the job. Mark is right in that someone new needs to take a chance at the Newsletter (Mark had the duties a few years ago).

I can say that the nicest thing about being Editor is the fact that you can do things your way. If you want to change the look of the newsletter, do it. The look of the newsletter depends upon what resources you have.

As for keeping in touch with the Sinclair Community while in Ohio, I plan to get an Internet connection and keep my MausNet feed, plus e-mail to Sinclair persons around the world, including CompuServe. There is a small Sinclair Group in Dayton. Thier POC is Gary Ganger, who is also involved with the group that puts on the Dayton Computer-Fest. I plan to get involved with that. I still plan to read the CATS newsletter, UPDATE, and the Toronto newsletter. Finally, I will continue editing and publishing the "QL Hacker's Journal."

I may be gone, but I will still be around. Keep your eyes out for me in the other Sinclair publications and, of course, the CATS newsletter.

See you all at the December meeting. Happy Hacking,

Tim

Look Skyward, Stranger

By Hank Dickson

Joe Miller, our executive committee member who keeps track of exchanges with other Timex/Sinclair user groups around the country, has pin-pointed a fresh and promising area of interest for T/S advocates.

He noticed that about five years ago there was a special interest group for Sinclair users who also professed astronomy as a hobby.

The publication put out by this group had readers all over the country and featured software routines for the Sinclair family of computers that delighted the users. The position of this group seemed to be that the Sinclair 1500 was just about ideal for the kind of calculations an amateur astronomer would likely be tackling.

We are going to try to determine why we lost track of the Sinclair Amateur Astronomers of the World.

Any publications which might be retrieved will be scanned for material which could be appropriately included in future issues of this publication.

If a personal contact can even be located in our area, perhaps we can schedule a presentation about astronomy and Sinclairs next year in our new conference room.

Meeting Notes

By Ruth Fegley

Just for practice (and because it was more practical for the presentation) we set up in the smaller room usually used in our former workshop sessions, plus it gave us more of a sense of togetherness. An unprecedented (of late) 17 of us attended, drawn, no doubt, by the chance to participate in the Archive programming tutorial, Part Two, which Carolyn Robbins was to present.

Our business meeting disclosed that 1) we are solvent, 2) we have prepaid meeting room fees for 1993 (schedule elsewhere in N/L) for 11 small rooms and one large one (due to non-availability of a small one on one meeting date) 3) the BBS is still functioning and being used, albeit sans hard disk, 4) the TS1000 emulator for a PC will soon be on the BBS for those wishing to run TS1000 programs on a 286, 386, or 486, 5) we need more articles for the N/L ASAP, 6) we need a volunteer for EDITOR and discussion ended with a decision to make a firm decision on the matter at the December meeting (note that an ED is "reluctantly" available if no volunteer comes forward), 7) George Rey promised to donate to the club his overhead projector AS IS, translation, it needs the prism part, 8) the club would purchase one IF George's cannot be fixed, and 9) there was nothing more brought up so the business meeting was adjourned.

Then, Carolyn gave a thoroughly delightful presentation on programming in ARCHIVE, continuing on from her first session and writing a procedure for the printing of envelopes with both the addressee and return address printed out on the envelope, each in its proper position. Now, participants of her tutorials have their own address database and a practical way to use it. I missed her first presentation, but I'm glad I caught her second one. Thank you, Carolyn.

Join Them Files

By Duane Parker

One of our members wanted to join two or more files together into one big one and couldn't find an easy QDOS command that would do that. I couldn't either. (See the CATS N/L, Jan 1989, p. 4 for an earlier discussion.) MS-DOS allows one to append one file to another (concatenate) just by putting "+"s between names:

```
COPY FLA.ASC + FLB.ASC FLC.ASC
```

This statement causes file "FLA.ASC" to be copied to "FLC.ASC" and then "FLB.ASC" to be appended to it. There are a number of "switches", and wildcard file descriptions that may be used - check with a good MS-DOS manual. Since QDOS doesn't work that way, what can we do?

For one thing we could open a new file into which we want to join the others, open the source files in turn, and repeatedly INPUT strings from source and PRINT strings to the receiving file. We repeat this process until each file "PRINT"ed to the end, and then CLOSE all the files. For example, if we had two files with lists of names, Relatives.lis and Friends.lis that we wanted to combine into All.lis, on a second microdrive, the following should work:

```
10 OPEN_NEW #8,MDV2 All.lis
20 OPEN_IN #5,MDV1_Relatives.lis
30 OPEN_IN #6,MDV1_Friends.lis
40 REPEAT loop_a
50 INPUT #5,x$
60 PRINT #8,x$
70 IF EOF(#5) THEN EXIT loop_a
80 END REPEAT loop_a
90 REPEAT loop_b
100 INPUT #6,x$
110 PRINT #8,x$
120 IF EOF(#6) THEN EXIT loop_b
130 END REPEAT loop_b
140 CLOSE #5: CLOSE #6: CLOSE #8
```

SPL Relative.lis

This program segment will work properly if the lis files have lines, that is, if the line-feed character is present, CHR\$(10). The line length must be shorter than the QL allows, and the file must end with a line-feed. Without a line-feed at the file-end, some bytes may not be copied, and the program stops with an error message. This can be corrected if we copy byte by byte, i. e., replace 50 & 60 and 100 & 110, each with a single line.

```
50 PRINT #8,INKEY$(#5)
100 PRINT #8,INKEY$(#6)
```

Is there an easier way? Yes, there is, if you have Tebby's Toolkit II. The procedure uses the background spooler that he provides, started with the SPL command, entered as:

```
SPL name_1 TO name_2
```

The typical use would be to spool a file to a printer, e. g.:

```
SPL Friends_lis, serl
```

Note that the comma may be used instead of TO. The spooler is then started as a separate job, and copies the file to serl - it is suspended if the device is in use. In other words, you may have the QL print files while you multitask another program. But, you must be careful to avoid closing or opening serl at the same time - odd things may occur. If name_2 is a filename, e. g. flp2 All (or just All, for the default drive), the name_1 is copied over the file "All" and the old file lost. If no "All" is on the drive the spooler creates it. Tebby provides a SPL USE command to set-up a default destination, e. g., first:

```
SPL_USE serl
```

then

TK2, other toolkits may have the will copy file "Relative_lis" to serl and stop when it is finished.

Under one method, SPL may be used to join files, although Tebby doesn't make that clear in his manual. The commands are:

```
SPL #channel_x to #channel_z
```

then

```
SPL #channel_y to #channel_z
```

Channels x and y must be from files opened for input and z must

be for a file opened for output. If all these files are closed ("CLOSE"), the file opened as z will be as long as the sum of those from x and y. To illustrate this the following program was written to concatenate 5 files named, tst1, tst2, etc.

```
100 b=FOP_NEW('trial')
110 FOR i= 1 TO 5
120   a=FOP_IN('tst!&i)
130   tflen= FPOS(#b)+FLEN(#a)-1
140   SPL #a TO #b
150   REPEAT check:IF
FPOS(#b)>tflen:EXIT check:REMark
This loop prevents closing channel
#a before spool is done.
160 PAUSE 20:REMark This prevents
0-length files from stopping the
program.
170 CLOSE #a
180 END FOR i
190 CLOSE #b
```

I hope that all of this will let you join those files, if not, I have written a SBasic program, all Babbage'd up (Herb Schaaf's term) that will do the joining for you. Just ask, I can give you a copy.

Finally, for those interested enough to get this far, I discovered some quirks and bugs in the SPL and SPL_USE commands. First, these apply only to Tebby's same commands, that might work differently. In no particular order, I list some quirks or bugs that I found. To illustrate, channels 3 and 4 represent files opened for input, while 5 is one for output.

1. Joining files also works as follows:

```
SPL tst1 TO #5
```

then

```
SPL tst2 TO #5
```

But, SPL #3 TO All, will just overwrite "All".

2. The command:

```
SPL_USE #5
```

does not result in an error message until you try SPL tst1, then QDOS reports: "Bad Name".

3. If the receiving file is opened, e. g.: OPEN #5, All, then

SPL tst1 TO All

gives an error of "In use", but if you first, SPL USE All, then OPEN #5, All, and finally,

SPL tst1

no error is reported and the spooler writes over whatever is at the beginning of the file, but leaves the remainder intact!

4. If #5 is closed during the spooling(SPL #3 TO #5), an error results, but some garbage is also written to the channel (maybe 40 bytes or so).

If you find anymore quirks, or tricks to avoid the problems, let me know.

1993 Meeting Dates

Here are the meeting dates for the year 1993.

January 9
February 13
March 13
April 10
May 8
June 12
July 10
August 14 (Hyattsville)
September 11
October 10
November 13
December 11

All meetings are at the New Carrollton Library, unless noted other wise.

ICEHOUSE Lives

By Hank Dickson

Three Decembers ago CATS witnessed a demonstration of a new board game called ICEHOUSE.

It had been developed by four University of Maryland/College Park graduates who found themselves working at NASA in Greenbelt.

The four originators who gave the demonstration were: Andy and Kristin Looney, John Cooper, and Charles Dickson III.

In the intervening time, ICEHOUSE became incorporated and a U.S. Patent (#4,936,585) was obtained.

ICEHOUSE remains a boardless board game that can be played on any flat surface almost anywhere. Small colorful pyramids make up the pieces which are played in any sequence desired.

Scoring is accomplished at the end of a game, at which time the positions and relationships of the pyramids translate into points.

ICEHOUSE has thus far been unable to find a big-time buyer for its product, but is still hopeful. An interim set of ICEHOUSE pieces has been produced using wood dyed to resemble the first colorful sets poured from acrylics. It was the acrylic sets that several members of CATS acquired after the demonstration three years ago.

Next Memorial Day weekend will see the fourth annual international ICEHOUSE tournament at the Sheraton Hotel in New Carrollton (also famous as the site of the CATS' 1989 COMPUTER-FEST). Players from all skill levels will be welcome. For information contact:

ICEHOUSE Games, Inc.
P.O. Box 761
College Park, MD 20740
(301-474-3160)

News

By Tim Swenson

From MausNet comes the following:

Dirk Kutscher has released fsh, a Forth programmable shell for QDOS. It is Freeware and provides the following features:

- User defined shell commands
- shell script support
- command line history
- user definable search order & default devices

It is available from sarina.dei.unipd.it in a zip file or from Dirk for \$15 at:

Dirk Kutscher
Manteuffelstrasse 54
2800 Bremen 1
Germany

Davide Santachiara reports that he has released:

- MasterBasic - PD utilities for SuperBasic
- ZM-1+ Spectrum Emulator
- ZM-2 & ZM-3 Spectrum Emulator & Pseudo-compiler

All can be had from Davide by sending 6 International Reply Coupons to :

Davide Santachiara
Via E. De Marchi 2
42100 Reggio Emilia
Italy

From Computer Digest (a local computer rag) reports:

Small Business Admin. offers a BBS for free business advice. Dial 800-859-INFO or 202-205-7265 at 2400 baud.

Gov. Printing Office has a BBS. It's free to browse but users need an account with the GPO to download. Dial 202-512-1387.

CATS BBS: (301) 588-0579, 8-N-1. 300/1200
baud. News and general information, 24
hours a day.

Timex SIG on CompuServe: Wednesday
night, 10:00 PM Eastern time (GO CLUB).

Networks

per year.
outside the Washington Metro area and is \$12
subscription is available for persons living
libraries, group buys, etc.). A newsletter only
months, and include all privileges (access to
Memberships cost \$15 per year, are good for 12

Newsletter

Monthly meetings are held from 11:00 AM to
4:30 PM, on the second Saturday of each
month, at the New Carrollton Public Library.

Meetings

The Capital Area Timex/Sinclair
Users Group is a not-for-profit group
devoted to serving the interests of those who
own, use, or are interested in the Timex/
Sinclair family of computers.

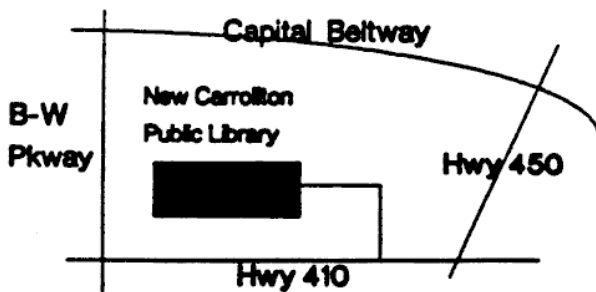
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CATS Newsletter
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FIRST CLASS MAIL



The next meeting of CATS will be held on: December 12, 1992

11:00 AM Hardware Workshop

2:00 PM General Meeting

At: New Carrollton Public Library 7414 Riverdale Road (Hwy 410), New Carrollton, MD

**IF YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER OF CATS. THIS IS THE ONLY ISSUE YOU WILL
RECEIVE**